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**HELPING TORNADO VICTIMS** — Gene Johnson, a member of First Church, Lumberton, and a volunteer with the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force, checks on the progress of the evening meal being prepared Feb. 18 for victims of the EF-4 tornado that swept through Lamar and Forrest counties on the afternoon of Feb. 10. The feeding unit of the Task Force concluded operations on Feb. 20, but work crews remain in the area and plans are being made for long-term rebuilding. (Photo by William H. Perkins Jr.)

## Disaster Task Force feeding unit operations completed

By William H. Perkins Jr.  
Editor

More than 23,000 meals were prepared by Mississippi Baptist volunteers in the aftermath of the powerful tornado that caused widespread destruction in Lamar and Forrest counties on the afternoon of Feb. 10, according to the coordinator of the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force.

Jim Didlake, director of men's ministry for the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB), said the mass feeding unit from Briar Hill Church in Florence conducted operations from its base at First Church, Petal, with Baptist volunteers from across the state. The unit closed its feeding operations on Feb. 20.

In addition to the volunteers who staffed the mass feeding unit, the Task Force also activated 12 teams to conduct chainsaw operations, debris clearance, and blue tarp roof work, and that work will continue, Didlake reported.

More than 300 Task Force volunteers have been involved thus far in the disaster response, Didlake said. He estimated that Mississippi Baptist volunteers have worked on about 185 damaged or destroyed homes.

The unofficial tally of homes affected by the storm stands at 800. The Oak Grove community in Lamar County took a hard hit, as did the cities of Hattiesburg and Petal. A number of businesses also sustained heavy damage. The office of the Red Cross in Hattiesburg was flattened.

see OPERATIONS on p. 10



**HIGH CLIMB** — Volunteers with the Mississippi Baptist Disaster Relief Task Force place blue tarps over a roof damaged by the Feb. 10 tornado that damaged or destroyed over 800 homes and businesses in Lamar and Forrest counties. (Special photo courtesy of Don Gann)

## SBC Exec. Committee weighs in on continuing Boy Scouts controversy

**NASHVILLE (BP)** — The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee Tuesday unanimously passed a resolution that criticizes the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) leadership for trying to change the policy on homosexuality, and urges the Scouts' voting members to uphold the current policy in May.

The resolution also commends Southern Baptists' Royal Ambassadors program "irrespective" of what the Scouts ultimately decide.

The BSA executive board appeared poised in early February to lift its prohibition on homosexual Scout leaders and members and replace it with a "local option," whereby each sponsoring organization would decide the policy.

Facing pressure from its base, the board decided to put the matter before its 1,400 voting members at the national convention in May.

"We applaud the many Scouts, Scout families, Scouting leaders, host church leaders, and other interested individuals for raising their voices with courage by contacting the national leadership and national board of the Boy Scouts of America," the resolution states.

"... [W]e call on and urge the representatives of the approximately 1,400 voting members of the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America courageously to stand strong on their moral convictions and vote to reject the proposed resolution from the national Scouting leaders, retaining the current policy of moral rectitude that has marked the Boy Scouts of America for more than one hundred years."

The resolution is critical of BSA leadership, noting that in January EC President Frank Page learned in a conference call with BSA leadership that they "had been working behind the scenes for many months to reverse this policy" while "keeping the more conservative majority of the scouting family in the dark concerning their initiative."

That action, the resolution states, amounted to "breaking trust with the very Scout

Oath and Law they pledge to uphold."

The EC, the resolution says, expresses "its deep dismay and disappointment at the conduct of any Boy Scout leader who openly or surreptitiously built support for their proposal to reverse the Scouts historic position on this issue, thereby alienating conservative religious bodies that sponsor the vast majority of Boy Scout units."

Lifting the policy, the resolution says, would "increase legal exposure" for any "chartered or sponsoring organization" which decides to uphold the biblical view of sexuality. The resolution also says that "should this new policy be adopted, dues from all local Scout troops and chapters would flow upward to help fund a national organization that would no longer share the complementary values once espoused by all chartered groups within the Boy Scouts of America."

Further, if the Boy Scouts change their policy, it would place them "at odds with a consistent biblical worldview on matters of human sexuality, making it an organization that would no longer complement, but rather contradict,

see CONTROVERSY on p. 10

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## From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

### Understanding the risk

It seems every day brings news of another incredible advancement in communications. Just as our great-grandparents marveled over the convenience and utility of the first telephone that was installed in their home, so are we held spellbound by our generation's remarkable gadgets.

Southern Baptists — and Mississippi Baptists — are taking advantage of the many technologies now at our fingertips to take the Gospel to places on this planet where it has never before been heard. Godless totalitarians have found ways to stifle the communication of our message, but they will never be 100% successful. They never have been, and never will be. God will find a way to reach lost people, through His people.

Despite the growing potential for accomplishing the goal of Matthew 28:10-20 to reach everyone on earth with the Good News through these modern communication technologies, there is a problem: We can say too much.

As the administrators of the greatest missionary-sending effort in the history of Protestantism, Southern Baptists have found ways to place workers in strategic areas of the world that aren't particularly hospitable to their presence. They can't be featured in the headlines or spotlighted on videos, but they are out there. Then there are the teams of local church members on short-term trips who coordinate closely with Southern Baptist personnel to get into areas where no Christian has trod in generations.

There are at least three ever-present dangers all of them face that should keep us on our knees in prayer around the clock:

■ Many of the areas where Southern Baptists are working are overwhelmingly Muslim, and more than a few have been locked in civil war for many years with Islamic extremists. As we have seen in recent days in Iran and Saudi Arabia (to name only two), Christians have been arrested and confined for no other reason than their faith.

■ Even if they aren't harassed and arrested, Southern Baptist

personnel in these areas risk exposure, expulsion, or worse if their profiles get too elevated.

■ Southern Baptist volunteers could be denied admittance to any of the countries hostile to their message. Many borders are already closed to outsiders, and scrutiny of incoming foreigners continues to increase with each passing week.

We need to understand that Christians are not welcome in many of these countries. As a television commentator put it, "Some of these governments would rather see their children starve before they accept a crumb of bread from the wrong groups." Those "wrong" groups include Christians.

The saying, "Loose lips sink ships," was used extensively in World War II. It means that information from people who talked about which troops were shipping out and where they were going could result in the enemy acquiring the information and thus being able to sink a shipload of soldiers before they reached a faraway battlefield.

Loose lips can also sink many of our Southern Baptist missions efforts. At a time when Christians are at risk all over the world, we must be very careful in what we say or write. For example, neither The Baptist Record nor the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board website will identify the countries or specific areas into which workers and volunteers will be traveling when doing so could jeopardize their safety or the success of their mission.

We must also be cautious about what we publish in our church and association newsletters, bulletins, websites — especially websites — and other methods of communication. This is not a call to be timid about our Great Commission efforts, but it is a plea not to hinder that work.

The Baptist Record will keep Mississippi Baptists informed, but with a constant awareness of what's at stake to help guard the safety and security of the many determined and dedicated workers and volunteers.

That's a pledge all of us should take.

## What would Jesus say?

Today it is popular among those promoting same sex marriage to say that Jesus never addressed the issue, that He was silent on the subject.

Those who affirm the historical and traditional understanding of marriage between a man and woman often are admonished to go and read the Bible more carefully. If we do so, we are told, we will see that Jesus never addressed the issue.

So, the questions that I want to raise is, "Is this assertion correct? Is it indeed the fact that Jesus never addresses the issue of same-sex marriage?"

When one goes to the Gospels to see exactly what Jesus did say, one will discover that He addressed very clearly both the issues of sex and marriage. He addresses both their use and misuse and, as He speaks to both subjects, He makes it plain that issues of the heart are of critical importance.

First, what did Jesus say about sex? Jesus believed that sex is a good gift from a great God. He also believed that sex was a good gift to be enjoyed within a monogamous, heterosexual covenant of marriage.

On this He is crystal clear. In Mark 7 Jesus addresses the fact that all sin is ultimately an issue of the heart. Jesus was never after behavioral modification. Jesus was always after heart transformation. Change the heart and you truly change the person.

Thus, when He lists a catalog of sins in Mark 7:21-22, He makes it clear that all of these sins are ultimately matters of the heart. It is the idols of the heart that Jesus is out to eradicate. Among those sins of the heart that often give way to sinful actions He would include both sexual immorality and adultery (Mark 7:21).

The phrase "sexual immorality," in a biblical context, would speak of any sexual behavior outside the covenant of marriage between a man and woman. Therefore, Jesus viewed pre-marital sex, adultery, and homosexual behavior as sinful, and He knew that the cure for each is a transformation of the heart made possible by the good news of the Gospel.

The Gospel changes us so that now we are enabled to do not what we want, but what God wants. Here we find real freedom and joy.

Secondly, what about the issue of marriage? Is it truly the case that Jesus never



Guest opinion  
with Daniel Akin

spoke to the issue in terms of gender? The answer is a simple no. He gives His perspective on this when He addresses the issue in Matthew 19:4-6.

There, speaking to the institution of marriage, Jesus is clear when He says, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate."

That Jesus was committed to heterosexual marriage could not be more evident. A man is to leave his parents and be joined to a woman who becomes his wife. This is heterosexual marriage. That He also was committed to the permanence and fidelity of marriage is clear as well.

So how might we sum up the issue? First, Jesus came to deliver all people from all sin. Such sin, He was convinced, originated in and was ultimately a matter of the heart.

Secondly, Jesus made it clear that sex is a good gift from a great God, and this good gift is to be enjoyed within heterosexual covenantal marriage. It is simply undeniable that Jesus assumed heterosexual marriage as God's design and plan.

Thirdly, Jesus sees all sexual activity outside this covenant as sinful.

Fourth, it is a very dangerous and illegitimate interpretive strategy to bracket the words of Jesus and read into them the meaning you would like to find. We must not isolate Jesus from His affirmation of the Old Testament as the Word of God nor divorce Him from His first century Jewish context.

Fifth — and this is really good news

see AKIN on p. 10

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# Pastor takes anti-pornography campaign to SBC

**OKLAHOMA CITY (BP)** — Pornography is the "pink elephant in the pew" — the embarrassing, big subject no one wants to talk about — and that silence is feeding a "bubonic plague" harming churches, pastor Jay Dennis told state Baptist convention executive directors and editors gathered in Oklahoma City on Feb. 14.

"Our enemy has found the perfect tool to deliver temptation to men — men who love God, men who love their wives, love their children, and love their churches. Yet their involvement in looking at pornography has virtually duct-taped their mouths closed and taken them out of spiritual leadership in the home and in the church," said Dennis, pastor of First Church at the Mall in Lakeland, FL.

Dennis spoke to state executives and editors at the invitation of John Sullivan, executive director of the Florida Baptist Convention. He surveyed the effort he began in his church in 2009 that has become the Join 1 Million Men movement to be featured at the Southern Baptist Convention this year.

## Burdened over issue

After his presentation, Dennis told the Florida Baptist Witness newsjournal he was burdened to address the issue even though he didn't want to when a growing number of women in his church sought pastoral counsel for husbands and sons who were struggling with pornography.

"I resisted... because I knew that the spiritual warfare component of this would be immense, and it has been," Dennis said, citing multiple health challenges he has faced in the last three years.

Unable to find resources written from the perspective of a senior pastor that were sensitive and "grace oriented," Dennis decided to research the issue and write his own materials.

Dennis told the state executives and editors that too many pastors are "out of touch," believing that pornography affects only a small percentage in their congregations. He cited a 2011 LifeWay Research survey of 1,000 pastors that found 62% of pastors believe less than 10% of men in their churches viewed pornography on a weekly basis. Dennis believes the figure is more like 80%.

## State of denial

Most churches, he said, respond to the problem of pornography by denying its reality while others are aware of the problem but are not specifically

dealing with it. Instead, pastors must "admit there is a problem and urgently address" pornography by helping men overcome it, Dennis said.

He described pornography as the "pink elephant in the pew" because "we have a huge problem that is primarily directed at men's attitudes toward women." He cited six characteristics that make pornography "so dangerous:"

- It is accessible.
- It is affordable and in many cases free.
- It is anonymous.
- It is addictive.
- It is altering in that it changes how men view women.
- It is amnesia-creating.

of 2010 during six Wednesday evening sessions.

"The response, honestly, surprised me," Dennis said, noting that after the third session he asked those who were struggling with pornography to stand while no one was looking. The noise of "theater seats flapping" constituted the "far majority" by his estimation while not looking.

"I thought to myself, 'This sounds like the beginning of freedom in our church,'" he said. "There was a spirit of revival that broke out among our men and this was the beginning of a journey that continues to affect positively the men, marriages and families of our church."

"There was a spirit of revival that broke out among our men and this was the beginning of a journey that continues to affect positively the men, marriages and families of our church."

**Jay Dennis**

pastor of First Church at the Mall in Lakeland, FL.

■ Educate pastors.

■ Have churches of all sizes participate in Join 1 Million Men.

■ Educate women and involve them in prayer.

■ Provide "man-friendly" resources.

■ Involve men who don't currently struggle with pornography.

■ Have the Southern Baptist Convention "lead the way" as it has on other moral concerns.

■ Train the next generation of church pastors.



Asked by the Florida Baptist Witness what success in the campaign will look like, Dennis responded, "When men are more passionate about purity than they are about pleasure, when churches can openly discuss this, instead of sweeping it under the rug."

He added, "Success will look like every pastor getting up and saying, 'OK, here is the pink elephant in the room.'"

## WMU, ERLC teaming

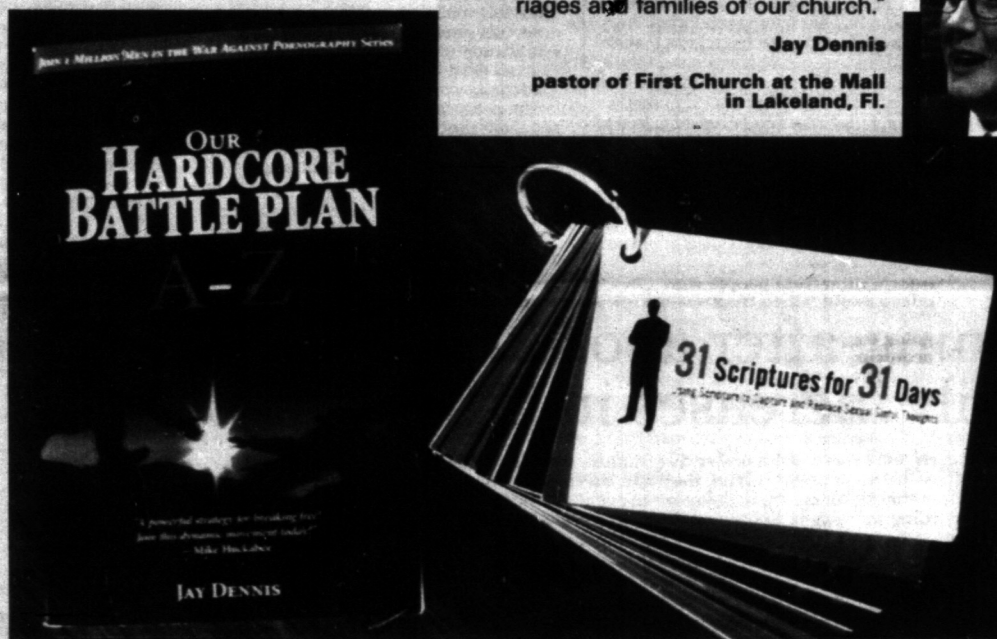
The national campaign will be unveiled in June during the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting in Houston, with Woman's Missionary Union (WMU) and the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) collaborating to provide exhibit space and other promotion.

New Hope Publishers, WMU's publishing arm, will publish in April two books along with other resources by Dennis. A chapter of one of the books, "Our Hardcore Battle Plan A-Z," is available as a pamphlet now exclusively through Christian Book Distributors until June.

Dennis praised the assistance offered by Richard Land, president of the ERLC, and Wanda Lee, WMU's executive director.

Land told the Witness that Dennis' effort is an "answer to prayer." The campaign is a "church-tested strategy on how the local church can help insulate their people from the ravages of pornography," Land said. "I cannot imagine there is a church in North America that would not benefit from implementing the Join 1 Million Men program."

"It will help to avoid tens of thousands of human tragedies. We at the ERLC will do everything we can to promote this in the days and months to come."



"This is a winnable war, but we must act very quickly," he said.

## One million men, women

Dennis said the "God-sized project" of creating a campaign for churches of all sizes and denominations seeks to involve at least one million men to take a public stand against pornography and one million women praying for men.

The campaign is geared to Christian men, he said, because only through the power of the Holy Spirit can men overcome struggles with pornography.

Convinced he needed to address the problem in his church, Dennis said he attended the Institute for Sexual Wholeness in Atlanta where he earned a certification in sexual addictions. He wrote the initial materials and taught them to his men in the spring

To date, 1,300 men have signed commitment cards that have been posted to a wall and tower prominently displayed at the church. The porn-free commitment includes 14 statements the men affirm.

Dennis said he has urged even men who say they do not struggle with pornography to make the commitment as encouragement to those who do and to "draw a line in the sand... to never go there."

"The wall has become an opportunity for our church to discuss this very sensitive issue," he said. "The door has been opened to publicly demonstrate our men's passion for purity."

## Action steps

Dennis outlined action steps to "win the battle of pornography in the pew," including:

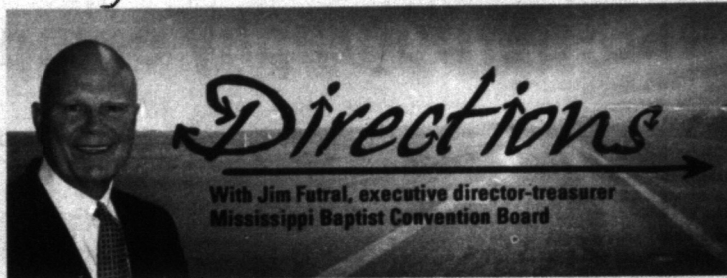


As a minister/pastor I have had the honor of being with individuals and with families as their loved one departed this life to be with the Lord. My very first experience as a young preacher seemed like it happened just by chance as I stopped by a home to visit with a man whose life was soon to be over. After visiting with him and his wife for a few minutes, I was going to have prayer and go on my way. He was conscious while I was there and said and did some things that marked my life for the rest of my days. I was holding his hand and getting ready to leave, but he left first. Gently, peacefully, and quietly, he took his last breath and was no longer with us.

I recognized what a significant event it was not only in the life of the person who was dying but in my life to be there with him. Of all of his many friends and the numerous family members who loved him, only his wife and the young, inexperienced, and unseasoned pastor were there. At the time, I treated it with great reverence and respect knowing that the honor and right to be there was bestowed upon so few individuals. It was not because of who I was, but it was because of who and where I served.

Until this day I have never gotten over those incredible, intimate moments. The last moments of life are especially memorable when the person who is in the last stages of life is conscious. In this day of strong medications and pain relievers, it is still not uncommon for someone to be able to converse shortly before leaving. When life becomes so short and so compacted, your focus becomes incredibly sharp. If you were looking back over the totality of your life in life's last moments, what would you change? What would you do? What would you not have done?

As you and I quickly move toward Easter and remember the death of our Lord on the cross, His burial, and then His



With Jim Futral, executive director-treasurer  
Mississippi Baptist Convention Board

## Life's Regrets

triumphant resurrection, it is interesting and noteworthy that when He speaks He expresses no regrets. But for many in our world, there are deep regrets. Sometimes they may be valid because of wrong decisions that have been made and repeated along life's way. At other times, the regrets are just the result of wishing that life could have been different or better.

Recently, I was reading an article written about Bronnie Ware, a nurse from Australia who had worked with so many people in the dying stages of life. The article was discussing her findings and what she wrote down about the five top regrets that she had heard expressed by people at the end of life. Basically, they were those things that they wished they had done differently.

1. *I wish that I had lived a life true to myself and not just true to the desires of others.*

2. *I wish I had not worked so hard. According to the nurse, many men had this regret for they had poured their life into their work at the neglect of virtually everything else.*

3. *I wish I'd had the courage to express my feelings.*

4. *I wish that I had stayed in touch with my friends.*

5. *I wish that I had let myself be happier.*

It is the realization that often comes toward the end of life that happiness is truly a choice. Some have described life as an unending series of "Y's" in the road. Every day that you live you will come to not one but dozens, if not hundreds, of them. With every turn and down which ever road you take means that you turn away from another road that could have led you in another direction. It is mind boggling for ultimately every one of those choices determines what you do, where you go, what you attempt, what you accomplish, the joys you experience, or the regrets that you have.

Now the truth is that while you may have regrets if you went down the same road on the same day with the same knowledge and the same degree of commitment to the Lord and to life itself, you may make exactly the same decisions that you did last year, 10 years ago, when you were in college, or when you were choosing who

you would spend your life with in marriage. It is probably easier to have regrets about those decisions than it is to be honest with yourself as to how you came to make those decisions. In fact, it is so much so that you can spend more time and waste a great deal of life and energy thinking about what could have, would have, or should have been when if you had been given the same pieces of information, it might have been identically the same.

Here is the glorious thing about this day in your life and in mine. We can make decisions that make a difference right now. The decisions can make a difference in how we will live this day and how we will embrace and enjoy the day that God has given to us. While Jesus was dying on the cross, there was a man on either side of Him dying in the same way and approximately in the same timeframe. One man looked at life with a critical, complaining eye and criticized Jesus. For if He truly was the Son of God, He could do some magic. He could get down, and then He could help these guys. The other man with a different frame of mind and with a trusting view looked to Jesus, leaned upon His strong arms, and said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom" (Luke 23:42).

Today is such a day in our lives because we can trust Him. None of us is in a position to change the parents we had or the heritage with which we grew up. Most of us may not be in a position to reach back into history and change who we were, where we were, or the work that we did in life. But today, this day, we can turn to the Lord and ask Him to use us, to bless us, and to touch someone else's life through us. For this day, we can live for Him in blessing others with no regrets.

The author can be contacted at [jfutral@mbcb.org](mailto:jfutral@mbcb.org).

## Use of morning-after abortion drugs steadily increases in U.S.

**WASHINGTON (BP)** — Almost one in nine young women who are sexually active have used the morning-after pill, nearly three times the rate that used it 11 years ago, according to a federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study released Feb. 14.

The study, which evaluated women between the ages of 15 and 44, found that 5.8 million women — 11% — used the morning-after pill between 2006 and 2010, compared to four percent in 2002. For women between 20 and 24, the rate was even higher: one in four women who had ever had sex used the drug at some point.

The increased popularity of the drug stems in part from easier access and news media coverage of efforts to lift the age limit for the over-the-counter sales. Women over 17 do not need a prescription to buy the morning-after pill, but must request it from a pharmacy.

Under U.S. President Obama's health care reform, employers will be required to cover birth control including morning-after pills, which likely will increase their use in the future.

Supporters of morning-after pills, which

are sold under the names Plan B, ella and Preven, claim they are merely contraceptive drugs that delay or prevent ovulation so the egg is never fertilized, but pro-lifers note that a second mechanism of the pill prevents a fertilized egg from implanting, which makes it an abortifacient drug.

The effectiveness of the morning-after pill also has been called into question. Researchers who demanded making it non-prescription found in 2007 that the pill does not reduce either abortion or pregnancy rates.

"No study has shown that increased access to this method reduces unintended pregnancy or abortion rates on a population level," the authors wrote. They also said the drug's effectiveness may be "substantially" overstated.

Americans United for Life (AUL) attorney Anna Franzonello said in a statement that the increase in use shows many women don't know what the drugs really do. "AUL's concern that life-ending drugs are being deceptively labeled as 'contraception' has only increased since the period that the CDC's national Center for Health Services (NCHS) study examined."

The study, which evaluated women between the ages of 15 and 44, found that 5.8 million women — 11% — used the morning-after pill between 2006 and 2010, compared to four percent in 2002.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention study released Feb. 14

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## POLITICS

# Same sex marriage moving forward in three statehouses

**SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (BP and local reports)** — Less than two months into the new year, legislative bodies in two states have passed bills that would legalize same sex marriage, while a civil unions bill has made progress in a third state.

The Illinois Senate passed a bill Feb. 14 that would legalize same sex marriage, three weeks after the Rhode Island House approved a same sex marriage bill. The Colorado Senate passed a civil unions bill Feb. 11.

Each bill still must pass the other chamber in each state, and the Democratic governors of each state support the respective bills. Democrats control the legislatures in all three states.

Gay marriage is legal in nine states and the District of Columbia.

The Illinois bill passed by a vote of 34-21, with two members voting present. Illinois already has civil unions,

which grant same-sex couples the benefits of marriage, minus the name.

"We are one step closer to marriage equality in Illinois," Illinois Democratic Gov. Pat Quinn said in a statement after the Senate vote. "Couples across Illinois have even more reason today to celebrate their love for each other, thanks to the hard work of committed advocates and lawmakers."

The bill's opponents, though, said the bill would impact religious liberty and parental rights. "If Illinois legalizes 'same-sex marriage,' parents can expect elementary school teachers to include homosexuality in discussions of family and marriage," Laurie Higgins of the Illinois Family Institute wrote.

"Some make the absurd argument that since families led by homosexuals exist, schools must teach about them. The truth is, however, that schools have no obligation to teach

"Some make the absurd argument that since families led by homosexuals exist, schools must teach about them. The truth is, however, that schools have no obligation to teach about every phenomenon that exists, nor do they have to include resources that affirm every phenomenon that exists."

Laurie Higgins

Illinois Family Institute

about every phenomenon that exists, nor do they have to include resources that affirm every phenomenon that exists.

"Does anyone believe that if a student being raised by polyamorists (people who maintain more than one intimate relationship at a time) were enrolled in a public elementary school, teachers or administrators would feel obligated to include books in their libraries that

affirm polyamorous family structures?"

Same sex marriage legalization, Higgins wrote, will mean that "children will be taught that homosexuality is normative and good." Society would be declaring that "children do not have any inherent rights to know and be raised by a mother and a father," she said.

State Rep. Greg Harris, a Democrat and the lead bill sponsor in the Illinois House,

said he believed the bill will pass his chamber, although he declined to say if he has the necessary 60 votes, according to the Chicago Tribune.

"I think we are very close to that," Harris said.

In Rhode Island, a same sex marriage bill passed the House 51-19 in late January, although it faces a more difficult road in the Senate, where Senate President Teresa Paiva Weed opposes it.

In Colorado, a civil unions bill passed the Senate, 21-14 and is favored to pass in the House.

The news wasn't all bad for traditionalists, though. In Hawaii, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee said in mid-February he would not schedule a hearing on a same sex marriage bill, a move that apparently kills the bill for this session, the Star-Advertiser newspaper reported. His colleagues, he said, did not want to bring it up.

## Need a light?

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words:

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)
2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)
3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)
4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

"But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name." (John 1:12)

If you make a decision for Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

## Abortion bill protecting minors faces tough uphill climb in U.S. Congress

**WASHINGTON (BP)** — Members of the U.S. Congress again are seeking to protect the rights of parents and the safety of their daughters when it comes to out-of-state abortions on underage girls.

Introduced Feb. 14 in both the U.S. Senate and U.S. House of Representatives, legislation known as the Child Interstate Abortion Notification Act (CIANA) would:

■ Prohibit the transportation of a minor to another state for an abortion to avoid a parental involvement law in her home state.

■ Require an abortion provider to notify parents at least 24 hours before performing an abortion on a minor girl from another state.

The legislation has a long and unsuccessful history. First introduced in 1998, the bill typically has gained passage in the House without approval in the Senate during congressional sessions. In 2006, versions of the measure survived both houses. Senate Democrats, however, blocked passage of a later House version even though it included the language their chamber earlier had approved.

Barring an unexpected development, the bill probably won't pass both chambers. The House, controlled by Republicans, appears to have an

easy majority for passage but the Senate, with Democrats in the majority, appears unlikely to approve the bill.

The Southern Baptist Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) in Nashville again endorsed the legislation.

"Remarkably, in many school districts, nurses must first obtain parental consent before dispensing an aspirin to a young girl, yet that same young girl could obtain an abortion without parental knowledge," ERLC President Richard Land wrote in a Feb. 14 letter to the Senate and House sponsors of the legislation.

"By requiring parental notification for out-of-state minors seeking an abortion and banning the evasion of state parental involvement laws, common sense is brought back into the policy arena."

U.S. Sen. Marco Rubio and U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, both Republicans from Florida, introduced the latest versions.

The Senate bill, S. 369, has 22 cosponsors in the 100-member chamber, while the House version, H.R. 732, has 74 cosponsors out of 435 representatives.

Rubio said Congress must help states enforce their parental notification and con-

sent laws. "Under current law, minors are subject to the exploitation and safety risks that often come from an overzealous interstate abortion industry," he said in a written statement.

Reports surface periodically of minors traveling from or being transported from states with parental involvement laws to neighboring states that have no such laws in order to undergo abortions.

Abortion clinics in states without parental consent or notification requirements sometimes advertise their services in adjacent states that have such laws.

Studies have shown men 18 or older are the fathers of the unborn babies of a majority of pregnant minors. The men, or their family members, sometimes take the minors across state lines to obtain abortions.

Supporters of the proposals to ban such activities argue that these men have an incentive to keep the pregnancy hidden by means of secret abortions, since they are vulnerable to statutory rape charges.

There are 30 states that have effective parental involvement laws that are not being blocked by courts, according to the National Right to Life Committee.

## Just for the Record



**MAGEE'S CREEK CHURCH, WALTHAM COUNTY,** ordained Billy Dunaway as deacon Aug. 26, 2012. Shown are deacon chairman James Sartin, pastor Wayne Hall, Dunaway, and Marie Dunaway.



**STRONGHOPE CHURCH, WESSON,** ordained Taylor Quick Dec. 12, 2012. Shown are pastor Robin Risher and Quick.

Dot Kitchens recently retired from **HARMONY CHURCH, JONES ASSOCIATION.** She served for 17 years and received a monetary gift and a plaque. She is shown with her husband Mack and pastor Hiram Eaves.



**FIRST CHURCH, EUPORA,** held a Valentine's Tea hosted by the Ruth Sunday School Class in honor of the TEL/Fidelis Matrons Sunday School Class. Shown are Marie Yates, left, and Thelma Sparkman.



**WADE CHURCH, MOSS POINT,** ordained Greg Shoemaker to the ministry Feb. 17. He has been called to pastor Orange Grove Church, Moss Point. Shown are Shoemaker, pastor Everett Childers, and Heidi Shoemaker. The Shoemakers have two daughters, Erin and Anna.



**MACEDONIA CHURCH, UNION COUNTY,** ordained Cory Lancaster to the ministry Feb. 18. He has been called to pastor Ruleville Church. Shown are Marianne Lancaster, Lancaster, and pastor Louie Williams.



**CHILDREN OF FIRST CHURCH, PLANTERSVILLE,** enjoyed a Valentine Dinner where they were seated and served by the adults.



# Testimony COOPERATIVE PROGRAM



featuring  
Rep. Andy Gipson  
Chairman, House Judiciary  
B Committee

## The CP and Child Protection Act

For too long, too many children in Mississippi have silently suffered at the hands of sexual predators. Our prior state law did not contain significant legal protections to require reporting and prosecution. Countless children needed someone to speak up for them. The passage of the Mississippi Child Protection Act in 2012 helps guarantee that children in our State will be guarded in a meaningful way against sexual abuse. The success of this legislation is due in large part to the tireless work and dedication of Missis-

siippi Baptists and the Christian Action Commission who maintained a watchful eye and lent support for several years leading up to final passage by both the House and Senate. I am absolutely convinced that your steadfast support of the Cooperative Program contributed greatly to this legislation finally becoming law. On behalf of the children of Mississippi, thank you!

To view this Cooperative Program Testimony online, please visit <http://www.mbc.org/cp/videos.aspx>

## OBITUARY

**Robert Donald Bolling**, 77, Petal, passed away Feb. 21 at Forrest General Hospital, Hattiesburg. He was born Mar. 17, 1935, in Montgomery, Ala., to Z.E. and Ernie Bolling. He was employed by the Merchants Company from 1969 until 1980 and joined Petal Cleaners as Plant Manager until his retirement in 1987.

He led music in several area churches, including Macedonia Church, Petal; Fellowship Church, Mosselle; and First Church, Runnelstown. He also led revivals throughout Mississippi and



BOLLING

Alabama. He is survived by his wife of 59 years, Mary Ishmael Prater Bolling; three sons, Mike (Becky), and Ricky (Sharon) of Petal and Ronnie (Tara) of Starkville; one daughter, Jan Graham (Steve) of Petal; eight grandchildren; seven great-grandchildren; four brothers; and two sisters. He was preceded in death by his parents and one sister.

Funeral services were at First Church, Runnelstown, Feb. 23 with interment at Macedonia Church, Petal.

## Revivals & Homecomings

► **Benton Church, Benton:** Revival, Mar. 1 - 3; Fri. - Sat., 7 p.m.; Sun., 10:30 a.m. followed by lunch and 5 p.m.; Daryl Oster, speaker.

► **Steep Hollow Church, Poplarville:** Revival, Mar. 3 - 6; Sun., 10 a.m., followed by dinner on the grounds and afternoon service; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Tony Monk,

speaker; Clark Walker, music.

► **Mt. Zion Church, Hernando:** Revival, Mar. 3 - 6; Sun., 11 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Wayne Hudson, speaker; Mark Bates, music.

► **Magnolia Church, Laurel:** Homecoming, Mar. 3; lunch following morning service; Billy James, speaker.

## Just for the Record



**BEULAH CHURCH, DECATUR**, hosted a wild game supper Feb. 9. Shown are pastor Gary Rivers, Phil Fancher, and Shawn Greer.



The Children in Action group of **HOPE CHURCH, NESHOBA ASSOCIATION**, participated in Children's Ministry Day Feb. 17. After a pizza lunch, the children, leaders, and volunteers went to the Choctaw Residential Center where they entertained with songs and visiting.

## In other Church News:

► **James E. Messer Ministries and the Mobile (Ala.) Association** are presenting a Bible & Evangelism Conference at **Government St. Church, Mobile**, Mar. 10 -14. Sun., 10:15 a.m. and 5 p.m.; Mon. - Thurs., 6 p.m. Lunch, 11:20 a.m. - Mon., St. Elmo Church, St. Elmo; Tues., Bayou Sara Church, Saraland; Wed., Highpoint Church, Eight Mile; and Thurs., Tillman's Corner Church, Tillman's Corner. Free. Speakers include John Sullivan, Hugh Freeze, Emil Caner, Tommy Green, Junior Hill, Don Wilton, Bob Pitman, Lemuel Taylor, and Jim Coldiron; music includes Phil Willis and Sons of the Father. Children's program each evening with Perry Robbins "Airhead."

► **Port Gibson Church, Port Gibson**, is hosting Armando Trujillo, classical musician and trumpet player originally from Cuba and more recently Guatemala, on Mar. 2, noon. Soup and sandwiches.

► **Siloam Church, West Point**, is hosting a hunting seminar presented by Harvest Outdoor Ministries Mar. 23, 5:30 p.m. Jon Paul Moody and Rusty Farmer, leaders. A meal of Brunswick stew, bar-b-q, and fried turkey will be served. \$10; reservations required. Call (662) 494-1705.

► **West End Church, West Point**, exceeded their \$4000 Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal by collecting \$8,078.28.

► **Academy Church, Blue Mountain**, is hosting Karen Peck and New River with The Servants of Ripley in concert Mar. 1, 7 p.m. Love offering.

## College News



**WILLIAM CAREY UNIVERSITY** hosted the Fourth Annual High School Art Competition in the Lucile Parker Gallery on February 9. The exhibition gave area high school juniors and seniors an opportunity to showcase their talents and compete for scholarships. Shown are West Jones High School students (front row, left to right) Katy Mattison, third place; Lindsay Goble, Best in Show; Destyni West, second place; Tabitha Wade, Honorable Mention; Summer DeLoach Honorable Mention; and (back row, left to right) Justin Little, Honorable Mention, with teachers Sharon Howard from South Jones High School, Lacey Cockrell from Northeast Jones High School, and Lori Harrison from West Jones High School.

# Suit Project brings Mississippi pastor, wife full circle

By David Williams  
Correspondent

**CRESWELL, Or. (Special)** — Pastor Sam Morgan calls himself a "boots-and-blue-jeans type of person," but in 2012 he realized he needed a new suit.

Since moving from the Bible Belt in 1991 to become pastor of New Hope Church in Creswell, Or., Morgan had often heard about the Suit Project, a ministry of the Men's Ministry Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board that sends new suits to pastors in new work areas.

"The offer had come many times over the years," Morgan said. "I've always declined. I've always thought somebody else could use it. This time I thought I really could use a suit, so I accepted."

He completed his application, filling in his height, weight, suit size, waist, inseam length, and chest measurement. He sent in his application by the Aug. 31 deadline.

George and Ann Underwood first heard of the Suit Project last October when they served as messengers from First Church, Coldwater, at the annual meeting of the Mississippi Baptist Convention in Jackson. They picked up brochures at the Men's Ministry booth in the exhibit hall and shared the information with their Sunday School class when they returned home.

"The class was excited about the project and decided overwhelmingly to send a gift," Underwood said. The collection that morning quickly reached \$200, and then something amazing happened.

"A class member named Russell said that something had prompted him to carry extra money to class that day even though he did not know why. Without further explanation, he reached into his pocket and produced two \$100 bills which immediately doubled the gift."

George, the assistant teacher of the Faith Class, and Ann, class treasurer, sent the \$400 to the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board in early November. In December, they contacted ministry assistant Deanna Vail in the Men's Ministry Department asking how they could make contact with the recipient of their suit so they could pray for him, his family, and his ministry.

They were told the suit went to an Oregon pastor named Sam Morgan.

Meanwhile, Morgan received his new suit, a \$125 gift card for his wife Janis, and a check for \$150. He contacted Vail, wanting to know whom he could thank. He was told the suit came from a Sunday School class at First Church, Coldwater.

Morgan was silent. He asked Vail to repeat the name of the church. For clarification, he asked exactly where the church was located, including the county and Baptist association. As she answered his questions, Morgan could hardly believe what he was hearing.

"That's our home church," he said. "That's where we surrendered to ministry."

Morgan recalled how he had been working for the telephone company in Senatobia and living in nearby Coldwater. He was 29, married, and had two children. They wanted to get the children into church, so they began attending First Church, Coldwater.

Soon, both Janis and he were saved and began serving in the church. "I struggled with God's call for three years, then surrendered," he said.

A key factor in hearing God's call was when Morgan went on an associational mission trip in 1981 to Billings, Mt., to do construction. In the summer of



**(ABOVE) SUIT PARTICIPANTS** — Members of the Faith Sunday School Class of First Church, Coldwater, were excited to learn the name of the pastor who received the suit they gave through the Suit Project of the Men's Ministry Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. Class members include (back row, from left) Bill Wilbourn, Will Williamson, Jack Kimbrell, Robert Hinton, Danny Hale, Russell Sanders, James Stanford, Randy Nichols, Chuck DeMorse, Cecil Burford, and Bob White (middle row, from left) Curley Kimbrell, Mickey Hinton, Jessica Stanford, Jenny Wilbourn, Ann Underwood, George Underwood, (front row, from left) Terry Kimbrell, Earl Forbess, Rita Forbess, and Allen Williams. (Special photo courtesy of Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist newspaper)



**(AT LEFT) LOOKING GOOD** — Sam Morgan (right), a pastor in Oregon, wears his new suit given by the Faith Sunday School Class of First Church, Coldwater. His wife Janis (left) also received a gift card from the class. The gifts were arranged through the Suit Project of the Men's Ministry Department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board. (Special photo courtesy of Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist newspaper)

1982, he and Janis made public their call to missions at First, Coldwater. The church ordained him the next year.

"We thought it would be foreign missions," he said, "but I didn't have college or seminary. I also needed three years of pastoral experience to go as a missionary with the Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board)."

He gave notice to the telephone company in August, sold their home, and moved his family to attend Baptist-affiliated Blue Mountain College in northeast Mississippi.

He had started a race against the clock, trying to fulfill requirements to become a missionary before his oldest child turned 13 — another foreign missions restriction.

Meanwhile, a country church called him as pastor and he told them he could only stay three years because he was preparing for international missions. "They were glad because no one else had stayed more than one year," he said.

After finishing college and a few semesters of seminary, Morgan realized he was not going to complete his M.Div. in time to go as an international missionary. He and Janis began exploring pioneer missions areas in the United States. In 1991, he was called as full-time pastor of New Hope Church in Creswell, Or. He has completed 21 years as their pastor.

"The first time I walked into the sanctuary, I knew that was where we were supposed to be," he said. He moved his family — four children by then — to Oregon.

The church was averaging 60 in attendance. Morgan began using Sunday School to lead the church to grow. The church went from nine to 24 classes, attendance

went from 60 to 150, and space from 6,900 square feet to 18,000 square feet.

Currently, the church has hit a space barrier and is looking at multiple Sunday Schools, off-campus classes, and other means to continue to grow. They recently started an off-campus class with 14 present.

First Church, Coldwater, will always be special to them, he said. It was the church where they were saved and called to ministry. It was the church that ordained him and sent them out.

"That church helped us get through college and seminary and supported us during our first pastorate," he said. "They paid the hospital bill for our fourth baby."

They also paid for his tuition and books all the way through college. "They sent us money every month," he said. "I was able to focus on my studies and my pastorate, and Janis was able to stay home with the kids."

Although they were unable to go overseas as missionaries, serving in the mission field of the Northwest has been a wonderful experience, he said. "I've had some amazing opportunities that would never have happened had we stayed in Mississippi."

Among those opportunities has been serving as second vice president of the Northwest Baptist Convention in 2004, preaching the convention's annual sermon in 2002, and serving a year on the Southern Baptist Convention Committee on nominations. From 2001-2009, he served as a trustee for the International Mission Board.

"I had a sense of guilt that we never

made it overseas. Janis went with me to my first meeting as a trustee at Glorieta (Conference Center in New Mexico) during Foreign Missions Week. It was tremendously emotional and I would find myself weeping during the services as we heard missionary speakers and leaders.

"It was the Lord dealing with my grief, saying to me, 'You didn't make it overseas, but that wasn't My plan.'"

Since 1964, the Mississippi Baptist Convention has challenged individuals and church groups to donate the money to provide a suit for a pastor serving in the Alaska, Iowa, and Northwest Baptist Conventions.

"Many of these pastors have no suit nor have the extra money to purchase one," Vail said. "By sending them a suit we are letting the pastors know that we care about them and that we support their work."

"If funds are available, we will send a gift certificate to the pastor's wife. Often they go without things that they want or need to support their husband's ministry. This is a wonderful way to show them that they are not forgotten and that the support they provide their husband is truly appreciated."

**Editor's Note:** Williams is editor of the Minnesota-Wisconsin Baptist newspaper in Rochester, Mn. For more information on the Suit Project, contact Vail at MBCB, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. Telephone: (601) 292-3335 or toll-free outside Jackson (800) 748-1651, ext. 335. E-mail: [dvail@mbcb.org](mailto:dvail@mbcb.org). Web site: [mbcb.org/mission\\_strategy/men/suit.aspx](http://mbcb.org/mission_strategy/men/suit.aspx)



# BIBL i O C I P H E R

OABZZBE OB LYB AGNE SGE GM DZNH-  
BA; MGN YB YHLY PDZDLBE HIE NBEB-  
BXBE YDZ FBGFAB.  
AKCB GIB: ZDQLT-BDSYL

Clue: A = L

Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Mark One: Thirty-eight

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

## DO YOUR PART

"PRAY TO THE LORD OF  
THE HARVEST TO SEND OUT  
WORKERS INTO HIS HARVEST."

MATTHEW 9:38

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# U.S. pastor standing strong under brutal Iranian prison conditions

TEHRAN, Iran (BP) — Pastor Saeed Abedini, a U.S. citizen of Iranian descent, has released a letter from within Iran's brutal Evin prison in Tehran, demonstrating that his faith remains strong despite abusive tactics from Iranian officials aimed at getting him to renounce Christ.

"They are trying to put me under such horrific pressures (that are sometimes unbearable) so that they can show me that my faith is empty and not real. And after all of these pressures, after all of the nails they have pressed against my hands and feet, they are only waiting for one thing... for me to deny Christ. But they will never get this from me," he wrote in the letter that was translated into English.

The text of the letter was circulated Feb. 22 by the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), which has been advocating for the pastor's release. He was sentenced in January to eight years in prison for starting a house church network a decade ago.

"This new letter from Pastor Saeed could not be more clear or direct — he continues to face life-threatening abuse simply because of his religious beliefs," said Jordan Sekulow, ACLJ's executive director. "The letter also underscores the need to move quickly."

Abedini, 32, reported that the conditions inside the prison are so difficult that his eyes are blurry and he lacks strength to walk. "Various (bullying) groups, the psychological warfare, a year of not seeing my family, physical violence, actions committed to humiliate me, insults, being mocked, being confronted with extremists in the prison who create another prison within the prison walls, and the death threats..."

As a Christian pastor, he believes he is carefully watched and is expected to smile despite the harsh treatment. "But, of course, I can clearly see what is going on and because I want to serve God, I see all of these difficulties as golden opportunities and great doors to serve."

"There are empty containers who are thirsty for a taste of the Living Water and we can quench their thirst by giving them Jesus Christ."

The imprisoned pastor went on to encourage fellow Christians, reminiscent of Bible letters from the Apostle Paul. "Maybe you are also in such a situation, so pray and seek God that He would use you and direct you in the pressures and difficulties of your lives."

Naghmeh Abedini, the pastor's wife, is living in the United States with the couple's two young children and has kept close contact with the ACLJ. Upon receiving the letter, she told the advocacy organization it is heart wrenching to know her husband is still being tortured in Iran, where he has been imprisoned since September.



"They are trying to put me under such horrific pressures (that are sometimes unbearable) so that they can show me that my faith is empty and not real. And after all of these pressures, after all of the nails they have pressed against my hands and feet, they are only waiting for one thing... for me to deny Christ. But they will never get this from me."

Saeed Abedini  
pastor, U.S. citizen of  
Iranian descent

"Now our worst fears have been confirmed," she said. "He continues to face life-threatening abuse at the hands of the Iranian officials simply because of his faith in Jesus. These are the dreadful conditions he will continue to face as he serves his lengthy prison sentence in Iran."

Naghmeh Abedini said her husband "will never recant his faith in Jesus," but she is greatly concerned about his health and well-being. "His situation is dire and with the continued abuse and death threats, we are not sure how long Saeed will survive these horrendous conditions in prison," she wrote. "The most important thing we can do is pray, continue to raise awareness of his case, and continue to work for his freedom."

More than 280,000 people had signed a petition as of Feb. 22 at SaveSaeed.org, a website aimed at rallying international voices to secure his release. "It is rare that he is able to get a letter like this to the public," Sekulow said of the pastor. "He has no voice. Each of us must be his voice. Sign the petition for his freedom at SaveSaeed.org."

More than 80 members of the U.S. Congress signed a Feb. 12 letter urging U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry to "exhaust every possible option to secure Mr. Abedini's immediate release."

The congressional letter states, "Every American citizen traveling or living abroad should have the assurance that the U.S. government will come vigorously to his or her defense if they are unjustly detained or imprisoned."

ACLJ filed a document the week of Feb. 10 with the U.N. Human Rights Council calling on Iran to immediately release Abedini, citing Iran's violations of international law and human rights abuses.

Writing for National Review Online in January, Paul Marshall, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom, said Abedini's case is "just one facet of Iran's increasing religious repression." He reported that at least 20 other Christians are currently detained in Iran because of their faith.

Pastor Farshid Fathi has been held in Evin prison since 2010, Marshall said, and pastor Behnam Irani, imprisoned since 2011, is being denied medical treatment for his serious health problems. Pastor Vruir Avanesian, Marshall said, was arrested in December, 2012, during a raid on a house church.

Iran has increased its persecution of Baha'is recently too, Marshall said. "The fact that Iran, despite current pressures, attacks peaceful and usually apolitical minorities shows that religious ideology remains a major determinant of its actions," Marshall wrote.

"It also shows that the regime is weak. Minorities are growing because many Muslims reject their rulers' version of Islam."

Iran is susceptible to international pressure, Marshall noted, pointing to the recent case of pastor Youcef Nadarkhani, who faced execution but was released after international pressure mounted.

"Even apart from the fact that Saeed is an American citizen, the [Obama] administration should realize that religious freedom can be a key element in changing Iran, and we should press it to do so," Marshall wrote.



## AKIN

cont. from p.2

— Jesus loves both the heterosexual sinner and the homosexual sinner and promises free forgiveness and complete deliverance to each and every one who comes to Him.

When I came to fully trust Jesus as my Lord and Savior at the age of 20, I determined that I wanted to think like Jesus and live like Jesus for the rest of my life. When it comes to sex, I want to think like Jesus. When it comes to marriage I want to think like Jesus. That means I will affirm covenantal heterosexual marriage.

It also means loving each and every person regardless of their lifestyle choices. It means, as His representative, proclaiming His Gospel and extending the transforming grace of the Gospel to others that takes us where we are, but wonderfully and amazingly, does not leave us there.

That is a hope and a promise that followers of Jesus gladly extend to everyone, because we have been recipients of that same amazing grace.

Akin is president of Southeastern Seminary in Wake Forest, N.C. This column also was posted at [www.between-thetimes.com](http://www.between-thetimes.com), a Southeastern Seminary website, and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press.

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## OPERATIONS

cont. from p.1

Structures in the southeast corner of the University of Southern Mississippi, at the intersection of U.S. Highway 49 and Hardy Street, suffered significant damage. Those structures include the Old Fire Station and the Ogletree Alumni House.

Don Gann is a consultant in the MBCB Men's Ministry Department and has been on the scene of the tornado since shortly after it touched down. "The Mississippi Baptist churches in the Hattiesburg area are some of the best organized and trained units in the Task Force. They have been coordinating with us and have a number of teams in the field that are not included in that volunteer total," Gann said.

The National Weather Service has classified the tornado as an EF-4 with sustained winds of 170 miles per hour — only one step below some of the most powerful tornadoes

## DONATIONS ACCEPTED

Checks should be made payable to MBCB, with "Miss. Disaster Relief" noted on the memo line. The address to mail donations is Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. On-line donations can be made at <http://mbcb.org/giving/>.

ever recorded. The Enhanced Fujita (EF) Scale is a standardized method of rating the magnitude of tornadoes. The scale runs from EF-0 with winds of 65-85 miles per hour, to EF-5 with winds greater than 200 miles per hour.

Didlake said the Task force is now moving into the rebuilding phase of its response, with follow-up meetings scheduled to determine long-term needs. "Once we meet with local Mississippi Baptist pastors whose churches partner with the Task Force, we

will know what those long-term needs are. In the meantime, insurance matters and other considerations have to be resolved."

An announcement will be made when the details of the rebuilding phase are worked out over the next several weeks, Didlake said. Rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina and other disasters involved donations of construction materials, skilled volunteers from the construction industry, and funding for the projects.

The MBCB is accepting financial donations to assist the victims of the violent weather. Checks should be made payable to MBCB, with "Miss. Disaster Relief" noted on the memo line. The address to mail donations is Mississippi Baptist Convention Board, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. On-line donations can be made at <http://mbcb.org/giving/>.

"In-kind" donations, such as food, clothing, or equipment, are not being accepted at this time.

## CONTROVERSY

cont. from p.1

belief in God and His moral precepts that serve as the basis for our Christian faith."

The resolution also calls on "business and corporate leaders who believe in the values of sexual purity, human morality, and biblical righteousness to render financial support for the Boy Scouts of America."

The resolution mentions the Royal Ambassadors, the Southern Baptist missions organization for boys in grades one through six.

"[I]rrespective of the decision of the National Council of the Boy Scouts of America, we continue to lift up and commend Royal Ambassadors as a Christian values-based organization that, for 105 years, has taught Christian values to boys in Southern Baptist churches, educating at least two million boys in biblical missionary principles and winning tens of thousands to faith in Christ through chapter meetings, Royal Ambassador camps, and other Royal Ambassador activities," it says.

## MS POSITIONS

**OPPORTUNITY FOR PART-TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR IN SYLVARENA, MS.** Small apartment available. Approx. 20 youth with great opportunities for growth. Located on Hwy. 18 between Raleigh and Bay Springs. Contact Brother Rusty Stockman @ 601 670-5754.

**UNION HALL BAPTIST CHURCH, BROOKHAVEN, MS, IS SEEKING A PART-TIME BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH DIRECTOR.** Resumes may be mailed to the church at: 1242 Nola Road N. E., Brookhaven, MS 39601. ATTENTION: Youth Director Search Committee.

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, MCCLAIN, MS IS SEEKING A FULL-TIME YOUTH MINISTER.** Please send resume to McLain First Baptist Church, P.O. Box 69, McLain, MS 39456.

**MINISTER OF STUDENTS/FULL-TIME POSITION, FBC MATHISTON, MS.** Please submit resumes via email to [mathistonfbcs@bellsouth.net](mailto:mathistonfbcs@bellsouth.net) or by mail at P.O. Box 260 Mathiston, MS 39752.

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, NETTLETON IS SEEKING A PART-TIME STUDENT PASTOR.** Please send resumes to: First Baptist Church, Attn: Student Pastor Search Committee, PO Box 427, Nettleton, MS 38858

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The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

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## Follow Sound Doctrine • 1 Timothy 1:3-17

The prophet Isaiah criticized eighth century Israel in the fifth chapter of his book: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness," CSB. This warning was echoed in 1 Timothy 1:3b, when Paul told Timothy to "Remain in Ephesus so that you may command certain people not to teach other doctrine or to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies," CSB.

Our society once again repeats the sins of our fathers as we call evil good and good evil. Even many church members confuse good and evil, as mainline American churches argue over what is sin, as though the Bible were not clear. Paul instructed Timothy to remain at Ephesus so that the believers there would be clear about doctrine and sin. He urged his protégé to command certain people about two mistakes: teaching false doctrine and fixating on false teachings.

When we read this passage about teaching false doctrine, we often imagine a first-century rogue preacher teaching that Jesus was not God, or the resurrection a hoax. More likely it was the teaching that Jesus is God, but that God does not expect holiness from His people. The serpent in the garden did not tempt Adam and Eve to doubt God's existence,

but to doubt God's word.

False doctrine is whatever contradicts the Bible. A prime example of false doctrine is modern society's view of sexual sins. The world today excuses the sinner and condemns the one who has the courage to speak biblical truth to the sinner. In today's feel-good church of Oprah, the sinner is excused of guilt and God is reduced to a bless-me deity who overlooks all sins except the corporate sins of greed,

excess, and intolerance. Concerning specifically the sins of homosexuality and adultery, false doctrine says, "Do

whatever you want; God still loves you and does not expect repentance." The Bible is clear, however, that both homosexuality and adultery are sins against God and that both demand repentance, (1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Hebrews 13:4).

In 2 Kings 8, the killing of babies in the womb is called a monstrous thing, yet our society has sanitized the death of the unborn so that we celebrate it

as a right instead of a shame. This too, is false doctrine.

Yet in this age of tolerance, those who dare to speak the truth of Scriptures will not be tolerated. While our society substitutes bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter, the church of the Lord Jesus Christ must be concise and vocal about the Word of God. Note that Paul told Timothy to correct those who teach false doctrine and those who pay attention to it. Paul said not

to listen to these false teachings at all.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 warns that the time will come when people with itching ears

will not tolerate sound doctrine, but will accumulate teachers to teach something new. The Scripture warns, "They will turn away from hearing the truth and will turn aside to myths," CSB. The purpose of God's word is to rebuke, correct, train in righteousness, and reprove us, not to make us feel good or scratch our ears. The electronic airwaves are filled with those who teach God wants everyone

healthy, wealthy, and wise. Yet unemployment is still up, and the death rate is the same for believers as well as the lost—100%.

Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 1:5, "Now the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith," CSB. God desires that we learn from Jesus. He said in Matthew 11:29, "take up My yoke and learn from Me," CSB. As we learn from Jesus, we love from a pure, forgiven, and repentant heart; (2 Peter 3:9), a clear conscience in knowing His forgiveness, (Hebrews 10:22); and a sincere faith (Psalm 119:7).

This first lesson of the quarter encourages us each to grow in godliness. That means we become more like our Father. The first step is to follow sound doctrine, which means we recognize false doctrine. If it contradicts God's word, it is false. I read that the best way for bank tellers to learn to spot counterfeit bills is to handle many genuine bills. We recognize false doctrine by learning from God's word daily.

Paul ended this passage praising the eternal King eternal. As did he, may our lives be to God's honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

Henson is pastor of Oakdale Church, Brandon.



### Explore the Bible

with Rick Henson

## Tradition or God's Word? • Matthew 15:1-11, 17-20

If you're a parent, you'll probably remember those "why" questions your toddlers and preschoolers presented you with incessantly. As I recall, many times I just wanted to say (patiently, of course), "Because I said so, that's why!"

But "why", "what", "how", "who", "when" and "where" questions help us gain needed information, understanding and guidance. Our Lord Jesus, although he knew the hearts of all men (John 2:23-25), occasionally employed the technique of asking "why" questions to challenge (John 7:23), to convict (Luke 6:41), or to comfort (Matt. 6:28-33).

This lesson begins a five-week series entitled "Questions Jesus Asked". Just as we grow through the use of questions (and answers), our spiritual life can develop by examining some pointed questions the Lord presented in Scripture.

Traditions...we cherish them, don't we? Maintaining the status-quo brings feelings of comfort and stability. But in our churches (and in our own personal lives), do we sometimes equate following traditions with having a right relationship with God? Do we think God is impressed by our Bible reading, prayer, church attendance, teaching a class, and ministry involvement when these acts are done more out of habit and a sense of obligation than of heartfelt devotion? Sometimes activities of the hands

(what's seen outwardly) are valued more than those of the heart. Such was the case we'll study this week.

Trying to trap Jesus, some Pharisees and teachers of the law asked him a "why" question concerning His disciples, who were eating without going through the ceremonial process of washing their hands first (see Mark 7:1-4 for more background on these customs). To forgo this act would cause a Jew to be considered "unclean". Matthew Henry (in the NIV Matthew Henry Commentary) further explains the "tradition of the elders" (vs. 2): "That people should often wash their hands, and always at meals. This they placed a great deal of religion in, supposing that the food they touched with unwashed hands would be defiling to them. The Pharisees practiced this themselves, and with a great deal of strictness imposed it on others."

Instead of responding to their question, Jesus presented one of His own, effectively turning the tables on them: "And why do you break the

command of God for the sake of your tradition?" (Matt. 15: 3 NIV). Note the Pharisees' own word – "tradition" – which Jesus reiterated in His query. Referring to the clear commands of Exodus 20:12 and 21:17, the Lord condemned their using religious customs for their own benefit. These outwardly-pious leaders, instead of providing assistance to parents in need, could negate their responsibility by calling

ing their monetary resources "Corban", meaning a gift that is dedicated (or set aside) for God or the temple (Mark 7:11).

Rightly accusing them of nullifying God's word for tradition's sake, Jesus pronounced them "hypocrites". Although these Jews honored God with their lips, "their hearts are far from me" (Matt. 15:8, Isaiah 29:13), the Lord declared, adding that their "worship" was useless, as "their teachings are but rules taught by men" (vs. 9).

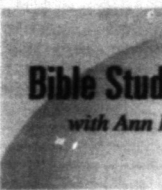
Beckoning the crowd to Himself, Jesus told them to "Listen and understand" (vs. 10). He wanted them to clearly see that not washing one's hands (or employing similar ritu-

als) didn't make one unclean. It's not what goes into the mouth, but what comes out (vs. 11). It's not a hands issue, but one hidden deep inside: "For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander," He said, declaring that such inward things are what defile (vs. 19-20).

Cautioning readers of his With the Word Devotional Commentary, author Warren Wiersbe states that outward rituals can be given as much authority as God's Word or can even replace it: "They may give a false confidence that what you do on the outside will somehow change the inside. But the heart must be changed, and external rituals cannot do that. The heart can only be purified by faith" (Acts 15:9).

So what should we take away from this lesson? Let's consider 1 Samuel 16:7: "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." May our prayer be that of David in Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Maniscalco is a member of LeMoyne Boulevard Church, Biloxi.



### Bible Studies for Life

with Ann Maniscalco



# Page: 1% Challenge accepted by about 15% of SBC churches

**NASHVILLE (BP)** — The 1% Challenge for increased Cooperative Program giving has been a surprising success, Frank Page, president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Executive Committee (EC), said on Feb. 18.

Page had asked the convention's 45,000 churches to consider a one-percent-of-budget increase in Cooperative Program giving, which would add \$100 million to the funding stream for Southern Baptist missions and ministries.

The 1% Challenge began almost two years ago and has received a great deal of positive attention. Honestly, more than I thought it would," Page told EC members in Nashville. "I thought... it might have some traction until we got a more comprehensive strategy in place."

The challenge has caught on, Page said, and at least 15% of Southern Baptist churches either have adopted the challenge or are seriously considering it. "It's making a difference," he said.

Also in his report to trustees, Page previewed a sweeping initiative still in the planning stages: Great Commission Advance.

"We will present the bare bones of this at the Houston convention [in June], but it will be developed much, much more over the next year and then presented in fullness in 2014," Page said.

Great Commission Advance, Page said, is an aggressive global vision for reaching the world for Christ based on a strong home base fueled by the Cooperative Program. The initiative will start in 2014 and go through 2020, Page said, and it will begin with a massive emphasis on stewardship.

Among the goals of Great Commission Advance are 7,000 international missionaries, 10,000 new churches in North America in the next 10 years, and reduced seminary education costs for students. State conventions can add their own specific goals, Page said.

"Friends, I do believe we're in a new day where we have an opportunity to do some things together better than we've ever done before," Page said. "We've struggled with trust in the past. We've struggled with really respecting one another."

"I believe we're seeing a day and a time where we realize the enemy is so powerful and the world is going to hell so quickly we must work together," Page said. "We don't have an option anymore. This us/them mentality has got to go, so I'm begging you to come together so that we can work together to do the work of the Lord."

Also in his report, Page said an area he has worked hard on during the past year is ethnic relationships. Through the Hispanic Advisory Council and the African American Advisory Council, Page said, he has been working with ethnic brothers and sisters in Christ to encourage deeper involvement in the convention than ever before.

Soon Page expects to announce the members of an Asian Advisory Council. "That is such an important group of ethnic within our culture," he said.

"Of our 45,000 churches, almost one in four is ethnic in some fashion — almost 10,000," Page noted. "Our leadership in all of our convention needs to reflect that ethnic diversity. Let's work hard on that."

Let's work hard on that."

Page said he will be working with David Dockery, president of Union University in Jackson, Tenn., on an Educational Summit where representatives from colleges, universities and seminaries will work specifically on "making education more accessible to our ethnic brothers and sisters."

Another area of concern during the past year, Page said, has been working toward unity on Calvinism. The advisory council he formed expects to deliver a report to the convention at the annual meeting in Houston, he said.

"While I'm a non-Calvinist, I'm not an anti-Calvinist," Page said. "Again, friends, if there was ever a day and time when we all need to be at the table together so that we can work together in missions and evangelism, it's today... We've got a long way to go, but we're going to come to a new day of saying, 'We respect each other and we are going to work together to win this world for Christ.'"

On the Saturday before June's SBC annual meeting in Houston, Page said, he'll be in the "roughest, poorest" part of the city going door to door, sharing the Gospel as part of the yearly Crossover evangelism initiative. He challenged SBC leaders and others to join him.

Also in his report, Page mentioned two particular issues that call for increased prayer in the coming days: the anticipated U.S. Supreme Court decision on gay marriage and the Boy Scouts of America's vote on whether to allow homosexual troop leaders and members.

The Supreme Court's decision could "affect our entire culture,"



**PAGE**

Page said. He added, "We need to pray." Regarding the Boy Scouts, "God's people spoke up and spoke up loudly," he said. "Continue to do that, please."

Page began his report by showing a Cooperative Program promotion video produced by the Missouri Baptist Convention titled, *From You to Eternity*, illustrating how a tithing Southern Baptist impacts the world.

"That's one of the things we're trying to do — some collaborative work with our state partners and entity partners. We come up with that which is best and then we share that and help provide those resources so that all of our state conventions can utilize those resources," Page said. The video can be accessed at [www.mobaptist.org/cp](http://www.mobaptist.org/cp).

Page recognized Jamie Jordan for 30 years of service as a convention attorney alongside Jim

Guenther. The two serve as the Executive Committee's outside general counsel. He also recapped the roles of each Executive Committee office: convention policy, convention communications and relations, convention finance, and convention advancement.

At the close of the 2011-12 fiscal year, Page reported, revenues exceeded the Executive Committee budget by more than \$384,000, expenses were under budget by \$336,000, and an undesignated reserve fund reached more than five million dollars.

"Financially, the Executive Committee is in a very positive state of rebound, and we praise God for that," Page said. "I told you before that we will always be fiscally careful. I am frugal in my own personal life and I believe it is God's money and we must be good stewards. We have worked hard to do this."

## Tebow pastor defends decision to cancel speaking date

**JACKSONVILLE, Fla. (BP and local reports)** — The day after New York Jets quarterback Tim Tebow cancelled a scheduled appearance at First Church, Dallas, under pressure from homosexual rights groups and news organizations, his pastor called for prayer for him and those "hated by the world" because of the stands they take.

Mac Brunson, senior pastor of First Church, Jacksonville, Fla., is the former pastor of First Church, Dallas. In 2006 Brunson left Dallas to lead the downtown Jacksonville megachurch, where the Tebow family are members.

Tebow announced via twitter Feb. 21 he would not speak April 28 at the Texas church's grand opening celebration of its new, \$130 million campus in downtown Dallas. "I will continue to use the platform God has blessed me with to bring Faith, Hope and Love to all those needing a brighter day," Tebow tweeted.

A news media onslaught about Tebow's speaking engagement hit after a New York Daily News headline called Tebow's appearance a "hate date" and the Huffington Post characterized First Church, Dallas, in a headline as, "Virulently Anti-Gay, Anti-Semitic Church First Baptist Dallas."



**TEBOW**

The pastor at First Church, Dallas, Robert Jeffress, has been nationally prominent in stating his biblical views regarding marriage, homosexuality, and during the

presidential campaign last year, Mormonism, according to the Southern Baptist Texan newspaper.

In a statement to the Florida Baptist Witness, Brunson said the media attacks on Jeffress, the church, and Tebow are without merit. "Clearly there is a bias in this country when it comes to evangelical Christianity," he said.

Further, Tebow's home church and First Church, Dallas, share the same beliefs, Brunson said. "There would not be a wisp of difference between the theology of First Baptist Church Dallas and First Baptist Church Jacksonville," Brunson said.

"First Baptist Church Jacksonville holds to the inerrant, authoritative Word of God. We hold to the traditional historic doctrines of the faith. We believe in marriage between one man and one woman just as we see in Genesis, reiterated in the New Testament and what every culture for 8,000 years of recorded history has demonstrated."

"While holding up the standard of God's Word, we love all people because God in Christ has loved us. The forgiveness of God in Christ is available to all."

Tebow has been no stranger to controversy and has stood strong to promote

his views," Brunson said. "In the midst of media scrutiny, spin, and relentless analysis, Tim Tebow's testimony has captivated the faithful, the unbelieving, and everyone in between."

"He has taken bold stands for Christ repeatedly that would have withered the best of us. This is not a person that capitulates. There is a lot going on right now, but Timmy trusts the Lord to lead him and he has committed his life to following Jesus."

Brunson asked for prayer for the 25-year-old athlete who slips in and out of church whenever he's at home in Jacksonville. "We need to pray for Tim. I spoke with Timmy recently and he still believes deeply in the Gospel we all hold dear."

"As an NFL football player, God has blessed him with a platform to share the love of Jesus Christ with millions. He will address other issues in his time. We need to pray for the good people and pastor at First Baptist Church of Dallas. They too, have taken a courageous stand for our Lord," Brunson said.

"Christ Himself told us that we would be hated by the world because the world hated Him. These are days to be bold for Christ and to love one another."